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Report on the Public Consultation Process

Encounter on the Nova Scotia Economy May 22 – May 30, 1991

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VOLUNTARY PLANNING

Preface

In March 1991, Voluntary Planning, an independent advisory group made up of business, labour and community groups, released its consultation paper *Our Province, Our Future, Our Choice*.

At the end of May, a series of 10 regional public consultation meetings were undertaken by Voluntary Planning; *Our Province, Our Future, Our Choice* was used as the focus for discussion. The *Report of the Public Consultation Process* is a brief summary of the comments and suggestions received.

It must be **stressed that this is neither a final document nor a government paper. It is an accounting of what you, the public, told us.** In particular, the paper highlights as key areas of concern those topics where public response was overwhelming. Quotes used in the paper are a small sample of the comments and suggestions taken from meeting notes and submissions.

One of the comments most often heard throughout the consultation process, and still to date, is where do we go from here?

> *We have met with the Premier to discuss what was heard and convey to him your key areas of concern.*

> *The presentation team members from the regional meetings are scheduled to meet with the Cabinet and Opposition to present first hand what they learned from the meetings.*

> *The presentation team members will be meeting with all provincial Deputy Ministers, beginning with the Department of Education, to present key areas of concern.*

> *This brief is being distributed to everyone who participated in the consultation process, as well as to any interested individuals or organizations.*

Finally, as noted earlier, this is not a final document and does not encompass the full range of discussion and comments received throughout the meetings. We will be incorporating what we have learned into an action-oriented final strategy paper. To do this we will need to continue the process and involve many more Nova Scotians in the ground swell of change begun this May.

Allan C. Shaw
Chairman, Voluntary Planning
July 1991

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Background

Voluntary Planning has worked on the development of an economic strategy over the past two years. Based on research and input from over 1,000 people, Voluntary Planning's CORE Committee developed the consultation paper *Our Province, Our Future, Our Choice.*

From May 22–30, 1991, Voluntary Planning held a series of regional consultation meetings in 10 regions around the province. Over 20,000 copies of the paper were distributed in advance of these meetings to assist and provoke broad discussion and debate. Each meeting was attended by one of two consultative teams.

The teams were composed of three Voluntary Planning members representing Labour, Business, and Education. The balanced composition of the teams assisted them in their role of presenting the paper's concepts and goals, and in engaging the participants in a good exchange of ideas.

"The care and commitment of last night's panel was obvious"

The regional meetings consisted of day-long sessions with meetings scheduled in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The morning and afternoon sessions were smaller focus meetings (averaging 20 people) as compared to the evening meetings, which were open to the public—reminiscent of old town meetings. The morning sessions dealt with community economic development groups and issues, whereas the afternoon sessions were sectoral in nature.

"The direction taken by Voluntary Planning is essential to the improvement of our future. Input, from us, the citizens, has to make us feel proud that we are contributing to a positive effort in developing the future"

Luncheons were sponsored by local groups (i.e., Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, Association of Atlantic Women Business Owners, etc.) and were primarily speaking engagements; however, at times questions and discussion did occur.

The meetings followed a standard format: a local chairperson (recruited from Voluntary Planning's membership) opened the meeting, the *Will to Win* video was shown, and the team members made introductory remarks on the challenges facing Nova Scotia and on the consultative process. At this point the meetings were opened for comments and suggestions from the participants. Team members engaged the participants in a dialogue to clarify concepts and to develop suggestions further.

"Excellent meeting, good information"

Comments at the day sessions were recorded by Voluntary Planning staff, while the public evening sessions were recorded as well as videotaped by local cable companies (verbatim transcripts of the public sessions were made). Finally, it should be noted that many people forwarded briefs and letters or phoned in their comments, and that Voluntary Planning continues to receive input and requests for presentations from a variety of people and organizations.

"The Voluntary Planning organization is to be commended in taking the initiative to inform the government of the views held by its membership, and through this consultative process, the views of the public—to the extent that this is possible"

In our estimation, the consultation process was extremely useful and successful. A total of 1,563 people participated, and we found them to be knowledgeable and extremely concerned with the economy of Nova Scotia. Although several people spoke on behalf of groups and submitted written briefs, the majority of participants spoke as concerned citizens.

This report of the public consultation process summarizes the meetings and puts forward several key areas of overwhelming concern based on the input. The published report will be distributed widely: to the three major provincial political parties, the participants of the consultation sessions, the 20,000 people who received Our Province, *Our Future, Our Choice*, and anyone who requests a copy.

We intend to rework the consultation paper, incorporating the public input into an action-oriented economic strategy paper.

Summary of Meetings

Comments received from the 10 regional sessions have been summarized into brief paragraphs and grouped into several general categories mirroring the "levers for competitive success" described in the consultation document and some additional areas. The categories are: Overall Paper, Definition of Terms, Levers (People, Quality, Productivity, Technology, Trade, Transportation, Creating New Business, Community Economic Development, The Government Role), Leadership, and Implementation.

It should be noted that comments often relate to more than one category or will need some correlating action in another area. The categories are primarily a helpful method for organizing the input received and are not meant to be exclusive.

While comments ranged over numerous topics, several general impressions arose from the meetings:

"It seems it has been the role of government over the past several decades to remove necessity (from the people) in order for elected officials to get re-elected"

> *Nova Scotians are disillusioned with politicians and do not trust government (regardless of political affiliation).*

> *Nova Scotians do not trust business and industry.*

> *Nova Scotians have become over-dependent on governments to solve our economic difficulties; however, government does have a role to play.*

> *In addition to infrastructure impediments, "attitude" is a real part of our problem.*

> *Removal of barriers to performance must be a major part of government's role of implementation;*

> *Active partners and supporters for nongovernment implementation must be brought into a coordinated initiative;*

> *The task of elevating the "larger provincial agenda" above all private agendas and making it real to the everyday Nova Scotian will be enormous.*

As indicated, comments and suggestions were recorded for all levers; however, People, Government Role, Transportation, and Creating/Developing New Business received an overwhelming amount of attention, which implies a strong public readiness for action and change.

Overall Paper

Throughout the meetings there was good support for the paper's thrust, concepts, and levers with differences of opinion about emphasis being the major item of disagreement. **No one disagreed with the paper's assertion that Nova Scotia has a serious problem. The majority of people felt the paper understated the problem.**

The biggest areas of concern were with implementation and the paper's lack of specifics. It was felt that the paper was a good "infrastructure paper" and that what is now needed is a strong "to do" paper with a timetable for specific actions. It was further felt that Nova Scotians are great planners but poor implementers: **concern was expressed that the paper not become another "dust collector."** Many people noted that the 1984 White Paper, *Building Competitiveness*, had not been fully implemented, and they were cynical about the prospects of success for this process.

Some concern was expressed over whether the paper presented itself so that average Nova Scotians could see a role for themselves in solving our economic problems. It was suggested that the paper intimates government would do the implementing and that this needs to be clarified.

The core value of sustainable development and the environment was an area of some concern. Participants found it difficult to reconcile the concepts of greater competitiveness, driven by the private sector, and increased economic development with the quality of our environment and lifestyle. There was some question as to how the economic strategy process would connect with the forthcoming sustainable development strategy process of the Nova Scotia Round Table on the Environment and Economy.

Often comments and suggestions reflected a desire for development that would be more "user friendly" to the environment and our quality of life. Tourism development was often cited as an appropriate tradeable good and/or service that could "use" our environment in an appropriate manner.

"Extremely well put together—most objectives general but relevant"

"Document is too soft and too motherhood and not a tough enough paper to initiate action"

"Document is dead on in the government role; quality and productivity levers—if anything it understates the problem"

"Good first step document, now need a good follow-up do document"

"Need greater emphasis in the implementation area—Nova Scotia's problem is lack of action"

"Keep on the 'Will to Win' path, don't let it [the paper] gather dust"

"Need something that all Nova Scotians will remember and get behind"

"Disagree with saying we have to pay the price economically for having a sustainable environment"

"Should show environment as number one priority"

"Eco-tourism market is comprised of people that go to places to see and experience natural environments, it is completely dependent on a relatively undisturbed environment"

"[We] Don't want policies to be developed around what's good for Halifax"

"Rural Nova Scotia has special needs and these are not much recognized in the paper"

"Paper seems to place people at the service of the economy rather than the other way around"

It was also noted the "options" reflected more of a metro-based approach than a regional one. It was agreed an overall provincial framework is required, but each region should develop its own implementation plan based on its priorities.

Participants were troubled by the paper's apparent contradiction in thrusts regarding long-term attitudinal change versus short-term economic change, and an economically competitive society and deficit reduction versus a caring society.

Finally, as a spin-off of the concerns about implementation and cynicism over the 1984 White Paper implementation record, several comments were directed towards Voluntary Planning and its role as an organization.

Voluntary Planning was criticized for not pressing government more vigorously to implement the White Paper, and it was generally felt it failed its monitoring role.

In spite of the criticisms, participants expressed their support for and were impressed with the concept of Voluntary Planning.

"Will need a team to be responsible that the paper is followed through on and it should be separate from the political process"

"Voluntary Planning should become the vehicle which markets the document and its concepts"

Speakers indicated that if this process is to succeed then Voluntary Planning will need to substantially change its traditional style of operation. To be the driver of implementation and agent for change of public attitude, it was felt Voluntary Planning is too quiet and confidential. The "Will to Win" exercise was seen as a step in the right direction. In addition, Voluntary Planning must:

> *Stay with the process and ensure it is implemented;*

> *Incorporate the input received into a rewrite of the consultation paper;*

> *Communicate and report back to the public and continue the public consultation process.*

To assume this role, Voluntary Planning was advised to be more open and public.

Definitions

"Approach presupposes winners and losers—poor approach"

Several definitional problems and concerns arose during the course of the meetings. Reflected in all the meetings was a concern with the terms "compete," "competitive spirit," "will to win," and "private-sector driven."

Competitiveness

"Competitiveness smacks of cut throat competition"

"Prefer the word succeed [as opposed to win]—it is a process"

"All for [the concept of] winning, but we need to be fair—a good deal is [when] both parties win"

It appears the problem is the correlation of these terms with their worst connotations of winners and losers, deterioration of the environment, downgrading of our quality of life, and the loss of the caring, nurturing side of our society.

In an apparent contradiction, participants did agree with the levers and the concepts that arguably are part of such words as "competitive" and "win." It would seem in most cases it is a question of scale

and achieving economic success in a more typically cooperative, Nova Scotia approach, rather than a "Thatcherite" or "Reaganomics" approach.

Private-Sector Driven

Although the paper attempted to define "private sector" as business, labour, and others outside government, it was invariably interpreted to mean "big business." This interpretation also held extremely negative connotations of smokestacks, loss of control over our natural resources and environment, and exploitation of workers. Nova Scotians do not entirely trust business and industry.

"Definition of private sector causes problems"

"Cannot leave the Strategy to big business"

Concern was expressed that groups and sectors that were not specifically mentioned, cooperatives, small business, entrepreneurs, community economic development groups, labour movement, and the natural resource sectors, etc., were in fact excluded.

There was also concern that the paper suggests an either/or approach, pitting the private sector against the public sector. This will not work. It is unrealistic to believe government does not have a role to play in the creation of economic prosperity in Nova Scotia.

"Report pits Private Sector against Public Sector"

The notion of a more private-sector driven economy assumes a healthy cooperative business-labour environment. This is not the case in Nova Scotia. The adversarial relationship that has plagued Nova Scotia must change if we are to solve the problems of our economy. We have a long way to go in this regard.

"Government, Private Sector, and Labour must be partners"

Many people argued we (all Nova Scotians) have given away our "citizenry responsibilities" to government with the attitude of "What is government going to do about it?" not "What are we (the people) going to do about it?"

"We have allowed government to play a major role—now we, as citizens, are at the point of wanting to claim back this role"

These things must change:

Firstly, the government must seek, value, and listen to the advice of business, labour, and the public-at-large to formulate policy, legislation, and regulation.

Secondly, the nongovernment sector, everyone outside of government, must participate in the consultation process to advise government and **apply the principles to their own day-to-day activities.**

"Need to get rid of we/they attitude, we all have a role to play"

"Need to develop trust"

It was argued that business in Nova Scotia is not prepared to meet the global challenge: that we suffer from poor labour relations, that there is a need for improved management training, and that business must be encouraged to reinvest in its own profitability by application of the paper's "levers" (People, Quality, Productivity, Technology, etc.) to its day-to-day activities.

"Nova Scotian companies are not very good at labour relations"

Thirdly, the people of Nova Scotia must regain their share of responsibility in the decision-making process while government provides leadership representative of its citizenry.

"'If it is to be, it is up to me' attitude is needed"

Clearly, Nova Scotians believe in a caring society and highly value our quality of life and natural resource endowment above competitiveness and winning at all costs. The task is one of striking a balance among the trade-offs: one that is best determined by a community deciding how it can best apply the paper's concepts to its own situation.

Levers

People

Education and training were among the items most often discussed. Overall five themes were consistently focused upon:

"Education in Nova Scotia is a problem"

"Answer to the education system is not more money"

The most-often-heard comments regarded the dire need to revamp the current system. No one suggested more money be spent on the education system—in fact most people felt enough was being spent on the system and that the output, for the money spent, was most unsatisfactory. It was felt the universities need to cooperate more fully, and there were several suggestions of rationalizing the universities—one suggestion being one university with several campuses.

"Need to develop contacts between business and education"

"Not one of our Business Schools in Nova Scotia ranks in the tcp 10 in Canada"

"Kids spend too much time training for the wrong things"

The need for greater linkages between the educational institutions and the private sector was the second most-often-heard comment. These linkages were suggested for all levels of the education system—grades primary through 12, community colleges, universities, technical schools, etc. Some people suggested that community colleges should have boards composed of people from the community to offer direction and advice on courses and content. There was some dissatisfaction voiced with the delivery of training courses by educational institutions to businesses in outlying regions and the attitude that business should travel to the institutions in Halifax, rather than that institutions provide courses on location.

"No recognition is given to skilled workers"

Support was expressed, and often stressed, for the principle that "education" was not only grades primary to 12, or the universities and colleges, but trades and skills training as well. It was felt that trades and skills training for management and labour need much greater emphasis and recognition.

"People are not aware of what is being done by the Community Colleges—Colleges are not apt to publicize what they've done"

There was general support for the community colleges system, but concern was raised regarding its effectiveness and complete implementation. It was noted there is a perception that only those people unable to "make it" at the university level attend community college. This needs to be dispelled—greater recognition is needed for community colleges. Strong concern was raised several times over the plan for accepting only high school graduates to community colleges.

There was some concern expressed over allowing elected school boards to raise their funds through taxes and the impacts this may have—from increasing municipal taxes and creating greater inequities between jurisdictions to the question of accountability.

"Fear of elected school boards with taxation powers—as soon as someone is up for election they spend money—we already have too much of this"

Quality, Productivity, and Technology

With regard to quality, it was noted that an attitude exists here that is not always conducive to quality. It was felt that we need to build on our strengths and the advantages of a resource-based economy **while focusing on quality and value-added.**

"Emphasis has to be placed on expanding the quality ethic in Nova Scotia"

"Focus on quality, including environmental quality"

Most participants decried the lack of productivity in business and government, and the lack of the concept of productivity in our youth. It was recognized that productivity is more an indication of poor management than a labour problem.

"Low productivity and quality of Nova Scotia's labour force (including management and professionals) suggests too many private sector people have been undermanaged, undereducated and undertrained, and are therefore unskilled in relation to global competitors"

Efforts must be undertaken by labour and business to develop new relations based on mutual respect and trust if we are to build economic security for the 21st century.

In general it was felt that technology is not well understood and that most people simply equate technology with wires and circuitry. It was also felt that greater cooperation among research agencies, educational institutions, and business is a must and that business needs to drive the research process as much as possible.

"Effective dissemination of technology, in both directions, between business and universities is one major challenge for a modern economic strategy"

Trade

There was no disagreement with the notion of trade; however, there was some confusion over the term "tradeable goods and services." Also, some concern was raised over the lack of emphasis of import substitution and "buy local" efforts.

"Concern over the use of tradeable goods and services—implies too narrow an interpretation"

In some of the meetings the concept of trade and greater competitiveness was viewed with some concern as a "selling-out" of our resources and environment.

"Concern over greater competition and its potential impact on (our) resources and people"

Again the province's high rate of taxation and high cost of doing business were highlighted as barriers to trade. The question of scale in regards to our ability to trade arose fairly often. In this context there were several questions and suggestions regarding a Maritime or Atlantic common market concept.

"Taxation on brewery in United States is 15 %, here it's 62 %"

"Scale is a problem—hard to justify even a moderate plant"

Finally, strong concern was expressed by several manufacturers and the primary agriculture industry over the paper's assertion regarding the potential elimination of existing marketing structures in order to be more competitive on a global scale. It was suggested that we should not attempt to redesign our national marketing structures to suit developments in international trade.

"Concerned about talk over the collapse of Supply Management systems"

Transportation

"Need to ensure excellent transportation links within the region if we are to operate as a single market"

There was no disagreement with the importance of this issue. In many areas this was identified as a key component to the potential success of tourism and/or trade.

Exception was taken to the paper's assertion of weak air links to the United States. It was noted that Air Nova would have 11 flights in operation by this summer.

"The Valley has waited a long time for the extension of the 101 to Yarmouth"

"No recognition of Yarmouth's link to the United States, and its importance"

Team members were sensitized to the transportation problems faced by the outlying regions. While no one disagreed with the importance of twinning the Trans Canada Highway, creating a link to the U.S. Interstate in Maine, and making Halifax Airport a regional hub, it was noted that the highway from Yarmouth to Digby still has to be completed, the rail system has been dismantled, and the ferry links are fragile.

Finally, there was some discussion that expenditures on transportation infrastructure are actually capital investments. Investing in transportation projects in recessionary times has a doubly beneficial impact by providing needed employment opportunities and the necessary infrastructure and capacity for trade when the recession dissipates.

Creating New Business

"Need access to venture capital to promote entrepreneurship and human development"

Essentially two major points were made by a significant number of participants in all the areas: **The need for venture capital and for some mechanism to capture all, or part of the funds which currently find their way to Central Canada or abroad.** At several of the meetings there was support for a system like Working Venture Canadian Fund Inc., a national labour-sponsored fund.

"Feel we are wasting money on grants and should be using tax credits based on performance not anticipation"

In addition to venture capital, a restructuring of the tax system that would allow business to keep a greater share of its income for reinvestment purposes was supported. In general the level of taxation was of great concern to everyone.

"Industrial development scenario resembles a bullfight, where the government waves a red cape around trying to attract business"

Finally, it was felt that too often, local talent is overlooked and not encouraged to establish itself in business, either in favour of outside business or because of a belief that it can't be done here.

Community Economic Development (CED)

There was a strong agreement on the need for coordination among the senior governments—federal and provincial—and their policies and programs.

"Need some rationalization of development agencies—most exist because senior government have decreed them, without consultation—there is a dilution of effort"

Clear concern was expressed that programs too often create a divisive effect on time, effort, and finances by requiring the development of an administrative structure to access funds.

Although it was recognized the CED area is currently fragmented, with a large number of organizations and players in this field, it was also recognized that CED is the only way to truly implement an economic strategy at the grass-roots level.

"CED can be the implementation aspect of the paper and process"

Finally, strong agreement was articulated for the need for a clear provincial policy on CED. It was felt that government's role is to provide "tools" for communities to take a realistic look at themselves and their potential.

"[We] Need an overall provincial CED policy and regional cooperation"

The Government Role

The appropriateness of government's role in the economy of Nova Scotia revolved around five general areas: the amount of government, government leadership and public participation in decision-making, duplication of services, the tax burden, and venture capital.

Everyone agreed we are over-governed and too often we look to government for answers and solutions. An overwhelming majority of people saw government's role as providing leadership in policy and infrastructure areas and then allowing business to proceed. Also, during the meetings it became clear the government of Nova Scotia has unintentionally erected many barriers to full performance in the private sector and a distressing number of examples were related including:

"Everyone agreed there is too much government"

"Governments often get in the way of innovative ideas"

> *A person waited 16 months for approval of a culvert to cross a stream so he could have access to his woodlot.*
>
> *An accomplished Nova Scotia businessman frustrated over the delays, bureaucratic confusion, and unnecessary hurdles in setting up a business in industrial Cape Breton will simply do his business elsewhere.*
>
> *Municipalities reported frequent instances of unreturned telephone calls and of waiting months for acknowledgement of replies to correspondence.*

"Need better coordination within government—must make regulations work—the process of decision-making is breaking down"

Although the paper proposes a private-sector driven economic process, **it is unrealistic to expect an either/or situation—all government led or all private-sector led.** Government continues to have a role to play and must show **leadership** by relinquishing some control and allowing a more open participative approach to planning and policy setting—particularly where business and labour are affected.

"Decision making must get back to the community level and government must be prepared to change policies"

The need for rationalization of programs and greater cooperation among all aspects of government was discussed at all the meeting locations. This included all levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal. With regards to municipal government, it was suggested that there must be fewer municipalities and that certain programs or activities could be delivered on a regional basis. Greater coordination among federal and provincial programs was also mentioned with a high degree of frequency, particularly in the community economic development area.

"Need more well defined mandates in government—greater cooperation and less duplication"

"Concern over increasing tax burden"

"Province should make greater use of investment tax credits where businesses reinvest in themselves"

"Province needs better investment tools to work with"

Everyone agreed that we are over-taxed. Reducing or eliminating grants to assist or support business was frequently mentioned at all the meetings. There was some concern over the removal of grants for business start-up , and a review of assistance programs was suggested prior to any being eliminated. Taxation incentives based on business performance or reinvestment appeared to be the preferred alternative.

Some means of establishing venture capital funds to capture local monies currently being invested elsewhere was mentioned at all meetings as an area that government could explore and facilitate.

Leadership

"Let's be more approachable at all levels—not just shifting responsibility to the municipality"

Tremendous concern regarding **leadership** was registered across all the regions.

The majority of participants felt government needed to show leadership in addressing our provincial deficit and economic development. It was felt that government was simply shifting its responsibilities on to municipalities and individuals in its cost-cutting efforts.

Leaders, in this case government, need to foster a more open, participative style of governing. Participative government or management guarantees decisions will not be arbitrary, secret, or closed to questioning. Everyone has the right and duty to influence decision making and understand the results.

"Believe neither Government nor Private Sector will be able to contribute fully to the necessary solutions unless joined by a third sector—energy, ideas and commitment of community"

Realistically, the achievement of this approach is a long-term process. Effective influencing and understanding spring largely from healthy relationships, mutual trust, and respect. Leaders need to foster environment and work processes that devolve power to the everyday Nova Scotian, and the everyday Nova Scotian must accept the responsibility to be involved. This style of leadership involves the empowerment of communities and regions to have a major role in determining their development.

Implementation

The question of implementation was raised repeatedly at all the meetings. The two most-asked questions were: "What is the next step in the process?" and "Is government prepared to do anything?"

It was noted that if there were to be any chance of economic success, all three parties would have to buy into the paper's concepts, and the paper could not fall prey to partisan politics.

"The whole process needs to be brought down to the community level"

There was a strong feeling that the concepts and necessary attitudinal changes would have to come from and be endorsed at the community level if any change were to occur.

The notion of a third-party "driver" or "overseer" of the process was mentioned numerous times. In some instances Voluntary Planning was suggested as playing this role. Quite simply people did not trust government (regardless of party) to undertake implementation on its own, nor were they willing to trust business exclusively.

There was agreement that attitudinal change would play a significant factor in beginning to implement the document and in acceptance of the levers.

There was overwhelming agreement that action would have to be the next step. A number of comments were recorded regarding our inability to get past the planning stage. Finally, it was noted that "blueprints" have been developed since the Stanfield days; the problem is that there has been no adherence or consistency to any blueprint or plan within which the private sector can operate. When this is compounded with poor labour relations, it is not difficult to see why our economic performance has been mediocre.

"Monitoring mechanism must be totally outside government but must be, as a minimum, given authority to have direct discussion with Ministers and Deputy Ministers and meet with them on a regular basis"

"Challenge is how to get past the talking stage"

"Need to build partnerships"

"Initiative has to come from non-government sector"

Key Areas of Concern

Once again, it is stressed that this is a report of the public consultation process. In reviewing the notes, recorded material, and submissions and briefs, several dominant topics emerged as being the ones in which participants were most anxious to see change. These are items that government, business, and the nongovernment sector can undertake now. The long-term section deals with the mechanisms for attitudinal and structural change necessary for economic success.

Short-Term Changes

The following are all areas that must be acted upon immediately and have identifiable and measurable changes by the end of two years.

Education/People

"Education system needs a substantial overhaul"

"Business must realize that training, education and investment in people is a significant ingredient in competition"

"Educational system is a disaster—have to make long-term changes; but there are immediate changes required in management training, trades and skills"

"Get back to basics—the 3 R's"

"Recently Saskatchewan has been speculating whether it can afford 2 universities—we have 13"

"Average training hours per year, for our workers, is four, we need continuous learning"

"Too few business-education partnerships"

Government, under the guidance of business and labour and with public input, must change the education system and/or remove the barriers to performance to make it more responsive to the needs of a global economy. Education and training were identified as crucial areas in which to begin changes. In all regions large-scale dissatisfaction with the education system was expressed. In addition it was recognized that business must be prepared to invest more in training for their workers.

Areas that need to be changed quickly are:

> *Primary to Grade 12: return to the three Rs; place greater emphasis on science and mathematics; offer fewer elective courses; develop some method of standardization and evaluation.*

> *Universities: encourage greater cooperation; rationalize universities—concept of one university with several campuses, for example.*

> *Continuing Education: provide greater support for continuing education; lower number of younger workforce means higher adult education population.*

> *Community Colleges: make community colleges more effective; fully implement the community college plan as originally written; reconsider the high-school graduation entrance requirement.*

> *Business: establish links and partnerships between business and the education system; place greater emphasis on training requirements for managers.*

Economic Planning and Labour Relations

It was suggested that a joint labour-business forum be established to resolve issues of mutual concern and to improve labour relations, thereby working together toward the mutual goal of a strengthened economy.

"Need to improve Labour-Management relations in Nova Scotia"

The creation of an economic strategy without a much more mature and positive labour relations philosophy is destined for failure.

"Greater innovation and partnerships between management and labour is absolutely required for the province"

When one views the labour relations attitudes of such competing countries as Sweden, Germany, and Japan, we in Nova Scotia can no longer afford to have our two largest sectors—business and the labour movement—going in opposite directions.

As the province prepares for the 21st century the systemic biases that have prevailed for so long must be eradicated from the mind set of business and labour. Effective efforts must be made to leave behind our 19th-century labour relations attitudes.

Economic security equates to job and income security. Both business and labour are acutely aware of this fact and could greatly enhance the realization of this goal by creating an environment of mutual trust and respect. This can only occur when labour is viewed as an equal partner in planning and creating our economic future.

"Need a cooperative relationship—Labour and Business—to discuss quality and productivity; if business loses, workers lose"

Regional Cooperation

A determined effort is required by all levels of government to address the need for greater coordination and regional cooperation.

"Can't have five different jurisdictions competing for the same thing"

Changes that must be made quickly are:

"Too many parochial interests"

> *Greater coordination among federal and provincial governments to resolve conflicts in policy, regulations, and project funding;*

> *Greater coordination of federal and provincial government efforts in community economic development;*

> *Similar to efforts to develop an Atlantic common economic market, the province has to consider its internal regions, including a rationalization of the 66 municipalities.*

"[We] Have barriers between municipalities, how are we going to compete on a provinces basis"

Atlantic Cooperation

Government is strongly encouraged to continue in its efforts to develop a cooperative Atlantic common market.

"Should [provincial] barriers come down overnight, it would hurt the industry"

In developing a common economic market, political decisions regarding harmonization of policies and regulations will have to be made. This must be an open, public process and not handled solely by the premiers, ministers, or senior bureaucrats. Businesses and industries affected by changing regional development policies, originally designed to maintain or enhance local production, must be consulted in this process. Strong concern was expressed by the primary agriculture sector and several manufacturers regarding any dismantling of marketing

"We should not redesign our national marketing structure [boards] to suit developments in international trade"

boards and trade structures that ensure quality local supply and encourage import substitution.

Removal of Impediments

"Government needs to streamline—[it] has too many regulations which slow down business and create extra costs"

"Government has to cease being interventionaist"

"Current private sector attitude is 'Government stay out of my business'"

Government must immediately begin to remove barriers to the performance of the private sector and the municipalities caused by activities of the civil service or conflicting jurisdictions and regulations.

Areas for immediate action:

> *Consistent with concerns expressed by the public, government should implement the consultation paper's recommendation on consultancy on performance enhancement in at least two provincial government departments. (The Victoria General Hospital could be used as a model.)*

Venture Capital Funds

"Have to find ways to get Nova Scotians to invest here"

"Small business needs capital"

"There are a large number of banks and trust companies here, they must be handling someone's money—need to repatriate funds"

Government must develop the necessary legislative and regulatory infrastructure to develop venture capital funds aimed at local businesses.

Areas for immediate action:

> *The province shall seriously examine development of funds and tax structures aimed at encouraging reinvestment in business and entrepreneurial activity (possibly on an Atlantic province basis).*

Implementation Plan

"Must have a mechanism to implement, and the implementation mechanism must outlive the Government role, Private Sector role etc.—need to put 'muscle' in place in Voluntary Planning"

"Implement it [the strategy] at the local level, and monitor it to see it is implemented without setting up new structures"

A third-party driver should be identified to ensure that the process continues, that an appropriate economic strategy results from the consultation process, and that implementation occurs at both the regional and provincial levels as well as within all the sectors of the Nova Scotia economy.

Voluntary Planning should act as the facilitator and agent for change and should monitor implementation. Building on the process started in the 10 regional meetings, Voluntary Planning would facilitate a more organized regional approach to planning by involving local community organizations, sectoral representation, and citizens to develop and implement a specific strategy most appropriate to their region. Ideally, Voluntary Planning would withdraw once the local structures have organized themselves.

Long-Term Changes

In the long term, over the next two to five years, a continual process of public awareness and attitude change will have to occur.

It should be noted that areas of concern listed under "short-term changes" are in fact a public call for immediate action in each of the specified areas to begin the process of change.

As noted earlier, everyone agreed that the economy of Nova Scotia is in serious difficulty, and everyone agreed that change is required.

The challenge is to interpret the economy and the necessary changes so they are directed not only at government or business or labour but at every Nova Scotian in every region of the province.

"Empower people so they can take a leadership role"

"Time to get citizens back to the governance of this province"

"Paper should become a community agenda"

Most people agreed that an overall provincial framework on policy direction is required with each region/sector developing and implementing its own plan and the approach that makes sense for its own situation.

This community and grass-roots approach to planning and economic development was stressed over and over again. However, it was also noted that a mechanism to facilitate a regional grass-roots approach to planning tied into the provincial network is required.

It was suggested that Voluntary Planning assume the responsibilities to facilitate and coordinate regional and grass-roots economic development planning and implementation and monitor the implementation of government's responsibilities. In order to achieve this role, Voluntary Planning will need to be more open and public. The process will involve large-scale public participation at the regional level and a public reporting process. It was also suggested that Voluntary Planning involve provincial groups and associations who themselves have strong regional networks: i.e., Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Manufacturers' Asscociation, cooperatives, Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, etc.

"Need to continuously clarify what Voluntary Planning is—it is not an arm of government, we must keep reinforcing this"

"Voluntary Planning will have to look for other groups to partner with, on implementation"

Conclusion

The shaping of our province's future is everyone's concern. The people of Nova Scotia have both a right and a responsibility to participate in the process.

The public consultation process was extremely useful. We found the people of Nova Scotia to be extremely knowledgeable, concerned, and **prepared to participate further to bring about change.**

Inevitably there are differences of opinion on specific issues; however there is broad support for a community-based cooperative approach.

We are convinced that "the biggest part of the process—to turn the economy of Nova Scotia around—is ahead of us." More people have to get involved and the sentiments of Nova Scotians, as expressed in the consultation process, must be reflected in the next version of a strategy paper.

In conclusion, we must build partnerships and establish the commitment from all parties that what inevitably results from this process of discussion and debate will also result in action.